

REMARKS

In the November 22, 2006 Office Action, claims 1-7 and 9 stand rejected in view of prior art, while claims 8 and 10-20 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter. No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the November 22, 2006 Office Action, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 9 and canceled claims 7 and 8 as indicated above. Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter and the thorough examination of this application. Thus, claims 1-6 and 9-20 are pending, with claims 1 and 10 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of above amendments and the following comments.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

In paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-7 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,115,692 (Nagano). In response, Applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 9 to clearly define the present invention over the prior art of record.

In particular, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite the allowable subject matter set forth in allowable dependent claim 8 (and intervening claim 7). Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1, as now amended, is not anticipated by the prior art of record. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Moreover, Applicant believes that the dependent claims 2-6 and 9 are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claim 1, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims 2-6 and 9 are further allowable because they include additional limitations. Thus, Applicant believes that since the prior art of record does not anticipate the amended independent claim 1, neither does the prior art anticipate the dependent claims.

Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejections.

Allowable Subject Matter

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, claims 10-20 were indicated as allowed and claim 8 was indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter and the thorough examination of this application. In response, Applicant has amended claim 1 to include the allowable subject matter set forth in dependent claim 8 (and intervening claim 7). Thus, independent claim 1 is believed to be allowable.

Prior Art Citation

In the Office Action, additional prior art references were made of record. Applicant believes that these references do not render the claimed invention obvious.

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In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicant respectfully asserts that claims 1-6, 9 and 10-20 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



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